

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
COLORADO STATE OFFICE
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June 17, 1997

In Reply Refer to:
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To: All Employees
From: Acting State Director
Subject: Policy for BLM Emergency and Search and Rescue Operations

Recently questions have arisen regarding the degree of involvement and the safety of BLM personnel involved in emergency and search and rescue (SAR) operations. This memo is to clarify the roles and responsibilities for BLM personnel participating in these operations.

The BLM Manual Handbook, 1112-2 "Safety and Health for Field Operations," states that BLM may assist primary Search and Rescue Offices on or adjacent to public lands when called upon. Such assistance must be fully coordinated with local agencies who have **primary** responsibility for emergency assistance. Bureau personnel do not replace existing search and rescue organizations, but merely supplement those already in existence. Whenever a request for a search and rescue is received, BLM employees must relay the nature of the situation to local authorities through the affected manager.

If BLM equipment is required for use, it will be the responsibility of the Field Office to develop plans, which include equipment and maintenance inspection schedules, to ensure the equipment is safe for use. A better alternative would be for the organization with primary emergency service responsibility to provide the equipment. BLM employees who volunteer to perform emergency services at the request of a primary emergency organization have the responsibility to be trained and current in the task as well as in first aid and CPR. It is essential that the employee make it known to the primary organization if the employee is not trained or properly equipped to do the job.

If there is an emergency situation in the area, but BLM employees have **not** been requested to assist, or the emergency situation is not on or adjacent to public land, employees will not render assistance unless they take personal leave. It is extremely important that the employee be cognizant of the above sentence. In other words, the employee is performing a service outside of the scope of his/her duties, and therefore, federal regulations will not allow, among many other things, compensation of the employee.

If you have any questions, please call Matt Barnhart at (303) 239-3804.

Signed by
Robert V. Abbey
Acting State Director

Authenticated by
Don Snow
EMS Operator